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TO: Local Health Department Immunization Coordinators
Local Health Department Health Officers
Public and Private Schools in California

FROM: Howard Backer, M.D., M.P.H., Chief
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SUBJECT: Update: Hurricane Katrina Evacuees and Immunization Requirements
Procedures for Immunizing Children with Lost Records

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, DHS Immunization Branch has received many inquiries regarding school entry when immunization records are unavailable. This letter is an update to the September 2005 letter entitled "Hurricane Katrina Evacuees and Immunization Requirements." Children relocated to California by the hurricane whose records cannot be located must now receive all immunizations specified by California law.

Recap of California's school entry requirements

California's immunization requirements are detailed in the California School Handbook available at www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/izgroup/handbook.htm. To summarize, California Health and Safety Code Sections 120225-120280 require specific immunizations before entry into child care and school. The California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 17, §6000-6075 requires parents (or guardians) of all new school entrants to present a detailed medical immunization record, typically the yellow California Immunization Record, which is available free from local health departments for this purpose. However, other records supplied by medical providers, including records from outside California or the U.S., are also acceptable, so long as the type of vaccine and at least the month and year of all vaccine doses are included.

The CCR allows all pupils transferring between schools within California or from another state up to 30 school days to present a medical immunization record. A school or child care facility cannot allow a child to register (or unconditionally continue in school) if the immunization record does not contain the month and year of each required dose.

Implications for children displaced by Hurricane Katrina

There are no special provisions or exemptions to these laws and regulations for children affected by natural disaster or relocation, such as has occurred after Hurricane Katrina. The immunization records of most children affected by Hurricane Katrina were in state-maintained Immunization registries. This information has been very helpful in record reconstruction. All efforts to obtain immunization records from a registry or providers should be exhausted before attempting to recreate the record from verbal histories. Schools and child care centers must refer children without immunization records or with inadequate records to a physician or health department to complete their required immunizations.

If a medical provider consents to a request to reconstruct immunization records based on the recollection of the parent or guardian, we recommend:

- If the parent has no record and the child's immunization history is based on parent memory alone, at a minimum give the child one dose each of
 - MMR,
 - DTP/DTaP/DT
 - Hepatitis B
 - Polio
 - Varicella
 - Hib, if child is under 5 years old
 - Record these doses with month, day and year of administration in the child's new immunization record.
- If you are certain that the child has had the other recommended doses and is thus protected, medical providers may record the estimated month and year that each vaccine dose was received upon the yellow California Immunization Record or similar document. In the "Doctor's Office or Clinic" column write "*By history*" and add your signature or rubber stamp.
- Obtaining serum antibody or titer levels to prove immunity and avoid immunization is discouraged as results may be unreliable and expensive. If a child has documented antibody to a disease for which immunization is required, you may grant that child a written medical exemption to immunization with that specific vaccine.
- If you are uncertain whether other vaccine doses have been received:
 - After receiving the doses recommended above, the child may be admitted conditionally to a school or child care facility, but this requires that you have the child complete the immunization series according to the recommended schedule.
 - If a pronounced injection site reaction to DTaP/DTP/DT occurs in a child whose record was lost, this suggests that the child has received the full

series, in which case you may grant a medical exemption to further doses of DTaP/DTP/DT until age 11, when a TdaP booster is indicated.

Thank you for your help in protecting California children. If you have any questions, please contact your local health department's immunization program, which is listed at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/izgroup/provider.htm> under "Vaccine Programs - Local Health Department Listing".

cc: Immunization Branch Field Representatives
California Department of Education
California Department of Social Services